

“Empowerment – Bridge to the Future”
Lieutenant General Stephen Wilson
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Welcome back! I thought there was a good show of energy last night. I hope we'll continue that today.

Today we're going to start though with our symposium speakers. Let me start with our speakers who have come from out of town to talk to us. Thank you for being here. Thank you for enlightening this group of future leaders for our Air Force on deterrence.

When we think about deterrence – what is deterrence? Admiral Haney talks about it. He says “when we go to a B-2 wing and say ‘what is deterrence?’ – it’s a B-2. When we go to a B-52 wing, they’ll say ‘well, it’s the B-52s,’ and you go to an ICBM wing and they say the same thing, and it is.”

The systems that make up that are certainly part of deterrence. The key word being part. But it’s more than that. It certainly takes the intel professionals to understand the environment, it takes all the space things that we have to be able to say ‘what is out there and how do I provide situational awareness to the commanders?’ It’s the forces that are ready every day. It’s the command and control that ties it all together, all the way from the President to the Airmen in the field. That’s nuclear deterrence.

So, ‘what does deterrence mean in the 21st century?’ is a hard question to answer. Because it’s all that I described, but it’s also the intellectual piece behind that says ‘how do I do that differently in today’s strategic environment?’

Let’s take a look at that strategic environment. When you look back over the last five years, would you say things have changed? I’d say they’ve changed in the last five months. I know five months ago I wasn’t talking about Ukraine or Crimea. I wasn’t talking about ISIS, and we certainly weren’t talking about Ebola. All that’s changed in the last five months. And we are a big piece of our nation’s strategic deterrence – that foundation, that bedrock, from which our nation gets its national security.

So that’s why, going back to the audience today, be a sponge with these speakers, because we have assembled some of the best and brightest from around the country, people who think about this, who can articulate it. So, ask the challenging questions of them, think about what they say, and internalize it. That’s how we’re going to make ourselves all better about what we’re doing.

Let me just stop and extend again my thanks to all who have come before us, and I want to introduce our first guest speaker, who’s a pretty amazing guy with his background. He’s our keynote speaker for a reason. Gen. Jack Chain is the former commander of our entire foundation, Strategic Air Command, CINCSAC.

Before that, he started out as a fighter pilot who flew F-4s in Vietnam, he’s got over 5,000 hours in multiple airplanes. This guy, you look at him in uniform, he’s got 66 jumps. When he was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, he became a master jumpmaster. He’s done every job you can on

the Air Staff, he commanded at every level, he commanded the famous 1st Fighter Wing at Langley when they got F-15s.

He went over to Europe and became the chief of staff for the Supreme Commander Allied Forces in Europe, and then he became Commander, CINCSAC, Strategic Air Command, 1986-1991. I want you to think about that timeframe in our country's history, and what was going on in the fall of the Berlin Wall, how things changed, and how we had to think differently about strategic deterrence.

So I can't think of a better guy to kick off our symposium and get us thinking about what does deterrence mean today in the 21st century, and how do we empower our Airmen differently? Because that's also, the theme of our symposium is 'Empowerment – Bridge to the Future.' So let me get our bridge up here to bridge the past to the future and welcome to the stage, General Jack Chain.